United Nations

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General Assembly

Forty-eighth Session

Official Records

106th Meeting

Monday, 19 September 1994, 3 p.m.

New York

President: Mr. Insanally ..... (Guyana)

The meeting was called to order at 3.45 p.m.

Agenda item 40 *(continued)*

The situation in Central America: procedures for the establishment of a firm and lasting peace and progress in fashioning a region of peace, freedom, democracy and development

(a) Report of the Secretary-General (A/48/985)

(b) Draft resolution (A/48/L.63/Rev.2)

(c) Report of the Fifth Committee (A/48/992)

The President: As mentioned this morning, the Assembly has before it a draft resolution (A/48/L.63/Rev.2) entitled "Mission for the Verification of Human Rights and of Compliance with the Commitments of the Comprehensive Agreement on Human Rights in Guatemala".

I wish to inform the Assembly that Ecuador has become a sponsor of the draft resolution.

The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft resolution. The report of the Fifth Committee on the programme budget implications of the draft resolution is now available as document A/48/992.

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/48/L.63/Rev.2?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 48/267).

Mr. Martini Herrera (Guatemala) *(interpretation from Spanish):* After the very clear and specific statements representatives of the Group of the Guatemalan Peace Process made today, the General Assembly's adopted draft resolution A/48/L.63/Rev.2 by consensus.

My delegation is very pleased to state for the record my country's gratitude for the understanding shown to the Government of Guatemala for the importance it attaches to the speedy establishment of the Mission for the Verification of Human Rights in Guatemala and compliance with the provisions of the Agreement. We are also pleased to second the gratitude already expressed for the role played in the negotiations by the Secretary-General and also by the Moderator. In addition, we would like to thank the Group of Friends, whose assistance has proved invaluable in the development of this process that seeks to put an end to armed conflict - the cause of most of the human rights violations in my country.

We would also like to take this opportunity to thank the Secretariat, the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions and each and every one of the representatives, particularly those of the

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Fifth Committee, whose hard work and dedication made it possible for this resolution to be adopted by consensus at this forty-eighth session.

The adoption of this resolution constitutes a necessary step forward in ensuring that the process of negotiation to achieve a firm and lasting peace in Guatemala, which has been successful so far, recovers the vitality it had in the first semester of this year: six agreements were reached in six months on very sensitive and delicate issues, in the midst of a lengthy confrontation.

My people had been impatiently awaiting this resolution, which constitutes nothing less than a rebirth of credibility. In the same way, the establishment and efficient action of the Mission will again make it possible for the time-table of negotiations to show the way to the end of a nightmare, so that my country will be able to dedicate its efforts to seeking social and economic well-being, as must be the case for the members of this community.

The President: May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 40?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 123

Programme budget for the biennium 1994-1995: report of the Fifth Committee (Part VI) (A/48/811/Add.5)

The President: The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft decision recommended by the Fifth Committee in paragraph 3 of part VI of its report (A/48/811/Add.5).

The draft decision was adopted by the Fifth Committee without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do likewise?

The draft decision was adopted.

The President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 123?

It was so decided.

Closing address by the President

The President: I should like now, with your indulgence, to offer some concluding remarks at this final meeting of the forty-eighth session of the General Assembly.

Comprising 184 nations - the near universality and wide diversity of mankind - this Assembly solemnly undertook to advance through this year the mission for which the United Nations was established: to maintain international peace and security; to develop friendly relations among nations and peoples; and, through multilateral cooperation, to deal effectively with the economic, social and humanitarian issues that affect mankind's existence on this planet.

From the beginning, we approached our work in a constructive spirit and with a forward-looking attitude, which, I am pleased to note, were sustained throughout the year. The resolutions and decisions adopted in this Hall, following patient negotiations in conference rooms and in the corridors, show that with goodwill there are no limits to the possible and that many things for which our peoples have long hoped and prayed for are these days increasingly within our grasp. We realized that the present historical conjuncture offered new opportunities for consensus and progress. Working with a sense of common, indeed global, interests, while avoiding needless confrontation, this session of the Assembly has demonstrated what can be accomplished in the spirit of cooperation.

It is not for me to judge if we rose to the measure of events. But certainly even an arbitrary and partial selection of the resolutions and decisions adopted will show that we have worked assiduously towards world peace, towards world development and towards strengthening the capacities of the United Nations to carry out its mission of peace and development.

Uppermost in our minds have been the first words of the Charter: "We the peoples". Our deliberations invariably transcended national boundaries and dealt directly with people issues: when we considered the worldwide scourge of drug abuse and pledged new support for a global plan of action; when we reviewed the humanitarian work of the Organization and gave it full endorsement; when we examined the universality of human rights and took decisions to translate into practical measures the Declaration of the Vienna Conference, most notably through the establishment of the Office of the

High Commissioner for Human Rights; or when we launched the International Year of the Family. In each of these cases, and many others, the representatives of non-governmental bodies shared our reflections and supported our goals.

During this Assembly also, we successfully concluded our negotiations on the law of the sea - without doubt the most important international treaty since the Charter. We also set in motion the International Tribunal for the Prosecution of Persons Responsible for Serious Violations of Humanitarian Law committed in the Territory of the former Yugoslavia since 1991. In this and many other ways, the General Assembly reflected the concern of nations to have a world governed by law, not by force or by terror or by a balance of terror.

In our continuing quest for a safe and stable world, regional organizations, which already contribute so much to peacemaking, have now begun to meet together under United Nations auspices to share the lessons of experience which can apply to the Agenda for Peace and help the organization satisfy mankind's longing to put an end to war. Reflecting the post-cold-war spirit of cooperation, the General Assembly endorsed the decision of the Conference on Disarmament to negotiate a comprehensive nuclear-test-ban treaty, which we hope in our lifetime can lead to the elimination of these horrific weapons.

Let me single out three developments that to my mind clearly illustrate the considerable progress that has been made towards achieving global peace and security. When it adopted its first resolution on 8 October lifting sanctions on South Africa, the Assembly was literally speechless. Later, in a historic session, the Assembly joyously welcomed back this founding Member into its family. The progress of South Africa's peoples in resolving their conflicts represents the triumph over racism of a spirit of dialogue and consultation. There can be no doubt that the firm stand taken over the years by the General Assembly in applying the principles of the Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights contributed to the amazing changes in that country. The resolutions on the Middle East marked historic developments that few could have anticipated. The General Assembly gave strong political support to the peace process in the region, which, we hope, notwithstanding obstacles still remaining, will proceed steadily forward. And now today, a principled stand has culminated in a breakthrough, which, if sustained, promises the restoration of peace and democracy to the troubled land of Haiti.

Such developments as in South Africa, the Middle East and Haiti encourage us to view with hope for peaceful outcomes the otherwise disheartening conflicts and civil wars which persist in Afghanistan, in many States of the former Soviet Union and the former Yugoslavia, and in East, Central and West Africa. The cost of conflict is heavy not only for its immediate victims but also for those who must pay for its resolution. At a time of scarce resources for development, we can ill afford the large cost of humanitarian and other rescue operations which preventive diplomacy and a relatively small investment in a United Nations presence could avoid.

(spoke in Spanish)

Let me turn now to the area of development. Guided by the Secretary-General's first report, the Assembly has begun serious consideration of the United Nations role in an Agenda for Development. The broad-based consultations which were held in June last in accordance with resolution 48/166 reaffirmed the mutuality of interest of developed and developing countries. The world hearings, in which both governmental and non-governmental representatives participated, advocated a greater role by the United Nations in the promotion of the Agenda.

It was also felt that development was being pursued largely outside the Organization and needed to be returned to its original niche which the Charter provides. In this scheme of things, the Bretton Woods institutions would be brought more directly under the United Nations umbrella for greater coordination of all development efforts. Other agencies might be merged to minimize duplication and overlap of activities and to maximize the use of available funding. Also envisaged by many was the empowerment of the Economic and Social Council to oversee the global economy.

These various proposals, which may be considered far-reaching and radical by some, in my view reflect a prevailing dissatisfaction with the present role of the United Nations in development activities as well as a generalized impatience to secure a revitalization of the world economy. Past policies and strategies have obviously failed to show improvement and must now be seriously reconsidered with a view to making much needed progress.

(spoke in French)

A concerted international effort is clearly required to bring about sustainable world development. The essential dynamic is political will, which has been noticeably lacking thus far. It is therefore devoutly to be hoped that the World Social Summit scheduled to take place in Copenhagen next year will summon the awareness and the commitment that are so urgently required for progress to be made.

The three main areas on which the Summit will focus - poverty, unemployment and social integration - are the concern not only of the developing countries but also of the industrialized nations. Poverty is not confined only to the South. Unemployment, the plague of small and poor economies, has become a major problem for the North. In both North and South, the problems of homelessness, disease and all manner of societal degradation have taken root. The time has come when the concepts of interdependence and international cooperation must be translated into practice to combat these evils which threaten our civilization.

(spoke in English)

May I now say a word on the Assembly's activities in gearing up the United Nations system to deal with our new circumstances. We found ways this year to resolve an impasse over the relations of the Economic and Social Council with the operating agencies. Here, I remain grateful to our colleague, the Ambassador of Benin, for assisting me in this effort. However, the Assembly's main exercise has been to become a Committee of the Whole - in effect, to examine all aspects of the role of the Security Council, the body charged by the Charter with special responsibilities for peacemaking and peace-keeping.

The Assembly's decision to create an open-ended Working Group to consider the questions of equitable representation on, an increase in the membership of, and all matters related to the Security Council was a timely initiative to preserve the United Nations efficacy as the custodian of world peace.

It was my honour to preside over this important body and, as such, I would venture to say that we have made a good beginning in our search for a more effective, open and representative Council. The views submitted by Member States were so succinct and clear that already one can discern the broad lineaments of what the Security Council might come to look like. I am very grateful to all delegations and to my two dynamic Vice-Chairmen, the Ambassadors of Finland and Singapore, for their contributions, as well as to the efficient Secretariat officials who helped us to advance our work during this session.

Quite understandably, it may take some time before these views are transformed into bases of agreement. The fact that all the issues are interlinked will require simultaneous progress on all fronts. Meanwhile, several important steps have been taken to establish better communication between the Council and the Assembly. Such initiatives, I believe, serve to develop a more cooperative relationship between these two organs and bring them into a harmonious balance under the Charter.

I come now to the further question of United Nations Secretariat reform and financing. The General Assembly approved a budget for 1994-1995 reflecting much of the restructuring which the Secretary-General deemed necessary to allow the United Nations Secretariat to continue to reinvent itself and to perform more effectively. Later, the Assembly established an Office of Internal Oversight Services and appointed its first Head. These measures, however, do not address the fundamental problem of States' failing to meet, and on time, the financial obligations they have as Members of the Organization and as signatories to its Charter. The United Nations, it must be reiterated, cannot function effectively unless adequately endowed with human and financial resources to carry out its missions of peace and development. To the extent that assessed budgetary obligations are unfulfilled, this part of the business of the forty-eighth session of the General Assembly remains unfinished. We therefore urge all States to show their commitment by meeting their obligations to the United Nations and to the world.

All things considered, the forty-eighth session of the General Assembly has been remarkably active. Not only were the issues on its agenda comprehensive but the pace of its work was greatly intensified. This, in my view, is indicative of the Assembly's desire to reclaim the patrimony bequeathed to it under the Charter. Now that the constraints of the cold war have been removed, the Assembly is poised to play its proper role in international affairs.

The Working Group on the Revitalization of the General Assembly has produced, under the diligent co-chairmanship of the Ambassadors of Sri Lanka and Uganda, a further report. I am pleased to note that the President of the Assembly has been asked to propose, following consultations, ways and means of facilitating an

in-depth discussion by the Assembly of matters contained in the reports submitted by the Security Council. This step will certainly involve, and give a greater say to, the Assembly in the vital issues of international peace and security. I do not see why the same cannot apply to the reports of other organs.

The role given to the Assembly under the Charter is, in my view, a major one. If justice is to be done to it, the Assembly must continue to examine seriously its methods and procedures to see whether they are both efficient and effective. I therefore urge the Working Group to expedite its consideration of this important matter and quickly devise measures for further improvement. I would personally hope that among these would be one designed to provide adequate resources to the Office of the President. Experience shows that as the activities of the Assembly increase so too will the responsibilities of the presidency.

I have been truly privileged to have had the opportunity of serving as President of the Assembly during this most exciting year. Now that I am about to demit office, I wish to reiterate my gratitude for the full support which I have received at all times from my own Government, from the Latin American and Caribbean Group, which did me the great honour of nominating me to the presidency, and, indeed, from all Member States. I am indebted particularly to the Vice-Presidents and the Committee Chairmen, who contributed greatly to the positive outcome of this session.

On behalf of the Assembly, I wish to offer a special word of thanks to the Secretary-General and his dedicated staff for facilitating the discharge of our many responsibilities. We remain deeply appreciative of the full and ready cooperation offered by the General Assembly Affairs staff and by our ever-helpful interpreters and other Conference Services personnel. Last, but by no means least, I wish to thank most warmly my own small staff, who performed yeoman service to ensure that the President's Office worked smoothly at all times. Their faithful efforts cannot be praised enough.

Let me conclude on the same note as that on which I began the presidency. At this turning point in human history, the United Nations needs to renew and restructure itself in order to become more responsive to the changing circumstances of the world today. To do so successfully, however, we must - like the authors of the Charter - have a clear vision of the world we want to build for the twenty-first century. As we are reminded by the Book of Proverbs,

> "Where there is no vision, the people perish". *(The Holy Bible, Proverbs 29:18)*

So, too, may the United Nations, unless we give urgent thought to how we enable it to truly become, as was envisaged in its Charter, a centre for harmonizing the actions of Member States to achieve their common ends.

Agenda item 2 *(continued)*

Minute of silent prayer or meditation

The President: As is traditional, I shall before closing this session invite the Assembly to spend a minute in silent prayer or meditation. I have always thought this a good practice, for sometimes silence can indeed be more eloquent and enlightening than speech. As George Santayana declared,

> "O world, thou choosest not the better part!
> It is not wisdom to be only wise,
> And on the inward vision close the eyes,
> But it is wisdom to believe the heart."

Let us therefore use this minute of silence to listen to our hearts and, holding fast to an inward vision of a better world, hasten to translate it into reality.

The members of the General Assembly observed a minute of silent prayer or meditation.

Closure of the session

The President: I declare closed the forty-eighth session of the Assembly.

The meeting rose at 4.15 p.m.